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The Review of Religions

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The

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نحمدہٗ ونصلی علی رسولہ الکریم

ISLAM: THE BRIDGE BETWEEN EAST AND WEST

[The following is the text of a speech delivered by Khan Sahib M. Ata-ur-Rahman, M.A., Assistant Director of Public Instruction for Mohammadan Education, Assam, at Shillong on May 3, 1939, in connection with the celebration of the Birthday of the Holy Prophet. The meeting was organised by the Shillong Muslim Union. —*Editor.*]

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen,

These are very anxious days that we are passing through. We have begun to feel as if we are on the brink of a precipice. The apprehension of the coming of a world-war, which will of course be more destructive than the one that the world witnessed twenty-five years ago, has robbed us of a great measure of the joys of life. It will, I venture to think, do us immense good if we turn away our mind on this sacred occasion from these distracting prognostications in order to dwell for a brief hour on the personality, character and teachings of that son of the Desert the very mission of whose holy life was to rebuild the world on the eternal foundations of love, goodwill and friendship. Mohammad, the Prophet of Islam, may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, to whose memory we all have assembled here to pay our respect, found his people rent into factions ever at war with one another.

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This naturally bled his heart, and his genius succeeded after long years of strenuous activity, to make them brothers through the potent influence of the religion he brought down from heaven and put an end to the tribal wars for good. "And hold fast to the cord of Allah", so the Quran describes the change, "and do not separate. And remember Allah's favour unto you: how ye were enemies and He made friendship between your hearts so that ye became as brothers by His grace; and how ye were upon the brink of an abyss of fire and He did save you from it" (3 : 104). In this hour of anxiety when we are threatened by an armageddon which, if it comes, is certain to destroy Our very civilisation and with it all that we hold dear. our heart naturally goes back, through the vista of centuries, to that Divine Teacher who gave humanity a new orientation of life and laid down canons of human conduct which, based as they are on righteousness, are calculated to ensure peace and progress of the world.

Now, this wonderful man was no empty visionary, no designing impostor. He was fully alive to the grim realities of life; he had complete faith in the divine origin of his mission. He realised the stupendousness of the task which Providence had placed on his broad shoulders; but he took courage, for had not Allah spoken to him, "Have We not opened thy breast, and taken off thy burden which had almost broken thy back?" His message was by no means insular in character and content but was destined to go beyond the confines of his native country, for he was no local or national prophet. His mission had in it elements of universality; for the God of nations had intended him to be a world teacher and for all times. The Holy Quran is clear on this point. "We have indeed sent thee, to the whole of mankind, to give them glad tidings as also to give them warning" (34 : 29). Elsewhere, "We have sent thee as a Mercy for all nations" (22 : 108). Again, speaking of the message of the Quran, "It is but a remembrance for all nations" (81 : 28). Yet

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again, "say, O mankind! Verily I am Allah's apostle sent to all of you without exception" (7 : 159). Accordingly, the Holy Prophet made declarations in the following terms:—

"On me have been vouchsafed five such gifts as were not vouchsafed on other prophets before me, one of these being that they were sent to particular nations but I have been sent to all mankind." (Related by Jabir in *Muslim*). And yet again, "I have been granted superiority over other prophets, for I have been deputed to the whole of God's creation". (Related by Abu Huraira in *Muslim*).

A claim, so direct in its nature and so universal in its scope and bearing, should of course stand the most rigorous tests and lend itself to the most critical examination. On the present occasion I propose to consider—

(*i*) whether the Prophet's life-history, his character and conduct, warrants the entertainment of his claim to have come as a God-sent teacher of man;

(*ii*) whether his teachings are of the highest standard and whether the rule of life he has laid down is calculated to meet the ever-varying needs of humanity; and

(*iii*) whether the system he has built has been beneficial to humanity, and whether it has still any contribution to make to the bringing about of a new world-order to which all mankind is expectantly looking forward.

Let us now take the first issue concerning the Prophet's character and conduct. Ladies and gentlemen, we are fortunately in broad day light while dealing wilh this subject; for, the Prophet of Islam is not a mythical figure or a legendary hero. As bringer of the youngest revealed religion his whole career, chequered and eventful, is an open chapter to the his-

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torian or the biographer. No part of his life is shrouded in mystery; none of his actions baffles understanding or interpretation. Indeed, it is difficult to say if any part of his life was at all private. His actions even in the sanctuary of his home were subjected to public scrutiny. The events of his life, including the minutest details, the way he sat and walked and the way he dressed, his likes and dislikes, his tastes and habits, his qualities and, let us say, his singularities, his utterances in the open and his prayers in secret, his behaviour within the precincts of his home and his heroism in the field of battle, the anguish of his heart when forlorn and persecuted and the subdued delight of his soul at the sight of men rallying to the banner of his faith in armies; the coolness of his mind when a fugitive in a mountain cave and his kingly dignity when standing as a victor before the vanquished, have all been placed on record with characteristic fidelity to truth. The words of wisdom that fell from his lips immediately passed into the memory of his followers, cultivation of memory being a trait in which the Arabs excelled and took legitimate pride. These were then committed to writing, and subsequently collated and organised into the Science of Traditions, which is the treasure-house of information about the Prophet's life, character and teachings.

Ladies and gentlemen, the student of the Prophet's life is bound to be struck by a remarkable unity which underlies the different phases of his life and gives grace and meaning to all his actions: This unity is of his deep faith in the truth of his mission, faith that never flinched and faltered under the severest strain. This unshaken faith is really the silken string that runs through the entire pearl-chain of his virtues that go to form his ideal character. It is the white purity of his character and the spotlessness of his life on which the Prophet took his bold stand on the very first occasion of his public appearance in the role of a divine messenger. When, at the instance of the Prophet, the Meccans had gathered together in the valley below the hill of Ṣafā—he surveyed the seething crowd from the

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top of the small hill and put to them a plain, direct question. "Before I tell you why I have brought you together", said the Prophet, "Will you tell me if you take me to be a truthful man or a liar?" "No", such was the loud response, "We have always known you to be the Trusty, the Faithful—*Al-Ameen*". About a similar challenge to the world made on the basis of his high character we read in the Holy Quran "If Allah had not willed otherwise—I would neither have recited the Quran to you nor communicated to you the divine message. I have indeed hitherto dwelt among you a whole lifetime. Do ye not understand, then?" (10 : 17).

It was indeed the Prophet's transparent sincerity his artless simplicity, his unimpeachable veracity that filled the heart of Khadijah, a widow who had several times deputed him on errands of trade with feelings of love and admiration. This relation subsequently ripened into a matrimonial alliance which, despite the dispartity of age, proved to be the happiest and the most successful. She remained a ministering angel to the Prophet till her death. Weighed down with the strange experience of the divine illumination that for the first ti ne came to him in the cave of Hira, he hastened to his loving wife, greatly agitated in mind, saying, "I have fear for my life." The good Khadijah consoled him in these tender words: "Never fear: By my Lord; Allah shall never disgrace thee; verily thou dischargest thy obligations to thy relations; thou speakest the truth; thou bearest the burden of the heavy-laden; thou dost cultivate the gentlest of virtues; thou honourest thy guest; and thou renderest help to those in distress." Who else, if not a wife, has the privilege of having access to the innermost recesses of one's heart? Can there be any testimony stronger and truer than Khadijah's to the high character of the Prophet?

Indeed, Khadijah was the first to believe in the divine message of the Prophet. "She was the first to believe in him because she was the first to be given an

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opportunity to study his character". The next to believe was young Ali his cousin, who had then been living in his house. The slave Zaid son of Harith, who had been brought up as his son by the Prophet after he had emancipated him, soon followed them. Abu Bakr, his closest friend, who succeeded him after his death, became his disciple immediately as he heard from the Prophet that Allah had raised him as His apostle, for he said that his friend was incapable of telling a lie. "It is strongly corroborative of Mohammad's sincerity", says Sir William Muir, by no means a friendly critic of Islam, "that the earliest converts to Islam were his bosom friends and the people of his household, who, intimately acquainted with his private life, could not fail otherwise to have detected those discrepancies which more or less invariably exist between the professions of the hypocritical deceiver abroad and his actions at home".

Even the Prophet's enemies did not hesitate to bear witness to his truthfulness and honesty. Historians relate an incident which happened in a conference of the Prophet's enemies which was held to devise ways and means of preventing the pilgrims from accepting the new faith. The plan was concerted that when the visitors would inquire of the Prophet and the new creed he founded, all would give one and the same answer, that he was an impostor, a charlatan. At this Nazar bin Al-Haras, one of the notorious nine who hatched the plot to murder the Prophet, stood up and said, "Mohammad was a boy amongst you. He grew up amongst you, and had been most popular with you; he was the most truthful in speech; he was the most trusted among you, until he turned grey and declared what he declared. Does it become you now to say, he is an enchanter, an impostor? No, by Allah, he is never an impostor, never an enchanter."

There is no question about the irresistible charm of the Prophet's personality. To come into contact with him was to love him, revere him, and remain loyal to him through thick and thin. He was a loving hus-

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band and an affectionate father. He used invariably to stand up when his daughter Fatima came to see him. He was a devoted friend and a considerate leader. The influence of his attractive personality radiated all round; and his companions—the Sahaba—were ever ready to lay down their lives, if by so doing they could spare the slightest pain to his body or mind.

I give here Stanley Lane Poole's estimate of the Prophet's personal character. "There is something so tender and womanly, and withal so heroic, about the man," says Lane Poole, "that one is in peril of finding the judgment unconsciously blinded by the feeling of reverence and well-nigh love that such a nature inspires. He who, standing alone, braved for years the hatred of his people, is the same who was never the first to withdraw his hand from another's clasp; the beloved of children, who never passed a group of little ones without a smile from his wonderful eyes and a kind word for them, sounding all the kinder in that sweet-toned voice".

II

Now, ladies and gentlemen, let us pass on to the second point in our discourse, *viz.*, the nature and quality of the teachings of the Prophet, and how far they help us to live an ideal life, a life of righteous ness both as individuals and as members of a society or community.

At the courts of Negus the simple teachings of the Holy Prophet were enumerated with naive simplicity by Jaafar the Prophet's cousin and Ali's brother. After five years of constant preaching the Prophet was able to gather round him but a small band of disciples, the first fruits of his indefatigable labour. They were of course subjected to the severest persecution, the most brutal inhumanity. Unable to bear the inflictions any further a number of them, with the advice of the Prophet, emigrated to Abyssinia where the Negus was expected to treat

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them kindly. He granted them shelter. But the Meccans would not suffer them to live in peace even in exile; they sent a deputation to the court of the Negus and demanded their return on the ground that they were renegades. The Muslims were summoned to the court to answer the charge; Jaafar as spokesman of the Muslims thus addressed the Negus: "O King! We were an ignorant people; we used to worship idols, eat carrion and commit all manner of indecencies, we used to ignore our blood relations and deal unjustly with our neighbours; the strong amongst us used to trample the weak under foot. We were in such condition when Allah raised a Prophet amongst us, whom we had known to be of noble birth, truthful and honest. He asked us to abjure the worship of idols and taught us to worship the One True God. He instructed us to speak the truth, to be faithful to our trusts, to treat our relations and neighbours with kindness. He forbade us to do evil, to tell lies, to devour the possessions of orphans, and to libel women of virtue He asked us not to commit bloodshed and commanded us to believe in Allah and worship Him. So we believed in him and followed his instructions; but for this our people became our enemies and persecuted us because we would not revert to idolatry. Unable to bear the sufferings we left our home and found in your country an asylum. So we do hope O King, you will be just to us'. The Negus was impressed, and allowed them to remain unmolested.

But this incident relates to a time when the movement started by the Prophet was yet in its infancy. As the years rolled on, the religion gradually spread and went through a process of development. Its teaching became crystallised in process of years as a consequence of the successive coming in of the revelations throughout the period of the Prophet's ministry. In order to understand the true spirit of the teachings and their implications we have to recall the magificent sermon which the Holy Prophet delivered on the occasion of the "Farewell Pilgrimage" in the last year of

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his life. Nearly a hundred thousand pilgrims, relates the annalist, had assembled in the valley of Arafat:

"Ye people!" said the Prophet, "Listen to my words, for, I am not sure if I shall live to meet you in this place next year". After every sentence the Prophet paused, and Rabia bin Umayya repeated it in a loud voice.

"Ye men!" he continued, "To-day under my feet all the pernicious customs of pre-Islamic days are abolished.

"Ye people! Henceforth your blood and your property and your honour are sacred and inviolable even as this day in this month and this city is sacred.

"Ye shall deliver the trusts to whom they are due.

"Ye people! Be not unjust to others that ye may be treated justly.

"Fear Allah in the matter of women. Women have rights against you even as ye have rights against them.

"And your slaves! Feed them with the food ye eat, and clothe them with the clothes ye wear. Treat them not harshly, for they are the servants of the Lord.

"Listen to me, O my people! All Muslims are brothers to one another. Treat not one another therefore unjustly.

"Listen! An Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab, nor has a non-Arab any excellence over an Arab. All of you are sons of Adam, and out of dust was Adam created.

"O people! Worship your Lord, observe your

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five prayers, and obey my commands that ye may enter heaven.

"Listen! Verily despair has met the devil, for he shall no more be worshipped in this land.

"Finally, O men, I am only a human being. Haply the angel of death comes from my Lord, and I have to respond to his call. For you, therefore, I leave behind two precious legacies; the first is Allah's Book which contains guidance and light, so take ye the Book of Allah, and hold fast thereto: the next is my family: I remind you of Allah in the matter of my family" He paused for a minute and then asked—

"Allah shall ask you about me; what will be your answer then?"

Again another pause. Then he asked,

"Behold! Have I not delivered to you the message of the Lord?"

"Yes; verily thou hast" was the reply from the teeming thousands; and the valley resounded with the voice of their affirmation.

Then he solemnly raised both his hands heavenward, and said" O my Lord! Bear Thou witness unto this".

Now, ladies and gentlemen, I need hardly say that the impressive speech delivered by Jaafar in the court of the Negus in the beginning of the Prophet's ministry and the great sermon of the Prophet delivered towards its close as his last important pronouncement, set forth between them, in a nutshell, as it were, the cardinal teachings of Islam.

While we carefully read the two speeches, one from the disciple and the other from the Master, we are irresistibly drawn to the conclusion that Islam is

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an incredibly simple faith and that it is a thoroughly practical religion. Belief in the One All-Perfect Ever-living God, the Creator, and Upholder of all, the Merciful and the Beneficent, the All-Knowing and the All-Seeing, the Controller of Good and Evil and the final Judge of our actions, is what constitutes the unalloyed monotheism of Islam. This monotheism is the beginning and the end of Islamic faith and morals; it is the essence and the substance, the soul and the body of the Quranic teachings. This *Tauhid* as embodied in the cardinal article of faith—*La Ilaha Illallah*—is the fountain-head and mainspring of Islamic life and conduct. It at once inspires and directs the Muslim's moral and spiritual life.

Throughout the Holy Quran we find that faith is seldom mentioned alone; it is almost always linked up with noble-doing. Here are just a few verses selected at random:

"Those who do good deeds, whether male or female, and believe, shall enter paradise and shall be given sustenance without measure" (40 : 41).

"Verily those who believe and do good deeds shall be entertained in the gardens of paradise where they shall abide for ever and shall not desire removal therefrom" (18 : 108,9).

"Successful are those who not only believe but who pray with humility, avoid vain deeds, pay the poor-due, guard their chastity ..., redeem their pledge and their covenants, and preserve their prayers—these are the heirs to inherit paradise, wherein they shall abide" (23 : 1—11).

"Verily those who say, Our Lord is Allah, and then persevere and remain firm, the angels descend upon them" (41 : 31).

"It is not righteousness that ye turn your faces to the East and the West, but righteous is he who not

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merely believes in Allah and the last day and the angels and the scriptures and the prophets but also gives out of his wealth, for God's sake, to kinsfolk, and to orphans, and the needy and the wayfarer and the beggars, and to set slaves free; and who observes prayer and pays the poor-due; and the righteous are those who keep their promise when they make promise, who are patient in tribulation and adversity and in time of stress. Such are those who are the true, and those are the pious" (2 : 178).

This synthesis of faith and action, of religion and ethics is, to my mind, the most momentous contribution of the Prophet of Islam to religious thought. According to him, religion is not an aggregate of articles of faith, not a bundle of doctrines and dogmas, not certainly a mass of rites and ceremonies, not even a system of philosophy revelling in abtruse problems of theology, but it is *par excellence* the transformation of our very life; its re-orientation involving a complete change of attitude, "turning of our face towards God," realising Him in our life and feeling His hand in the government of human affairs. Such a religion that implies the complete change of outlook, the true conversion of the mind and the spirit, the transformation of our entire inner being is called in the Quran *Din-i-Hanif*, the pure unmixed religion, or *Din-ul-Qayyim*, the upright religion. That is the right religion," so we read in the Quran, "but most men know not—Turning unto Him only; so be careful of your duty to Him, and keep up prayers, and be not of those who ascribe partners unto Him" (30 : 31, 2).

Elsewhere this upright religion is clearly named Islam—"Verily the religion acceptable to Allah is Islam"—the religion of striving after Allah and surrender to His will. If we study the life of the Holy Prophet we find that while he impressed upon his followers the great lesson of submission to Divine will, he never forgot to point out that such a surrender to Divine Providence as Islam demanded of its followers

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did not mean the idle passivity of fatalism nor the barren complacence of ritualism; it meant, on the contrary, that Muslims should make the best and the right use of the God-given powers to work out their destiny in an individual and collective sense, to alter the existing conditions of life to suit their needs, and to create new conditions where necessary, always remembering that their actions must be governed by the sole motive of "seeking the good pleasure of Allah." The sword of the murderer wins for him eternal hell; but the sword of the martyr or the patriot secures for him the bliss of heaven. One seeks the favour of the devil; the other seeks the good pleasure of Allah, the Supreme Source of all Goodness.

The key-note of the entire body of the Prophet's teachings is this "turning of face Godward," this God-consciousness, or, shall we say, as somebody has beautifully put, immersion in God-Idea. The life of the Muslim is to be a ceaseless energising towards this ideal—the ideal of living by Allah, in Allah, and for Allah. "Verily my prayer and my sacrifice, and my living and my dying are for Allah, the Nourisher of the Nations" (6 : 136).

The Holy Prophet teaches his followers to realise that Allah is present everywhere. He is before us and behind us; He is above us and below us; He is within us and without us. He pervades the whole of our existence; He permeates our inner being. The Prophet tells us again and again that if we desire to realise Allah's presence we must purge ourselves of sin and seek His nearness by being baptised. It is not the baptism of fire or water but it is in the Quranic language the baptism of Allah—"the Baptism of Allah, and who is better than Allah in baptising, and Him do we worship" (2 : 139).

For such baptism no priesthood is necessary; for, according to the Prophet, every man has the privilege of direct access to Divine Presence. He has taught his followers to observe not merely the five daily

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prayers, but to pray to Allah constantly and incessantly so that the whole of our life may become one unbroken chain of prayer. For it is by prayer that we open out our soul to our Maker, and it is in prayer that we enjoy His fellowship. How beautifully is the idea of this direct fellowship between man and his Maker and realisation of God's presence is brought out when the Holy Prophet gives us directions as to how we should pray: "Pray in such a manner," says he, "that you feel you see Him with your eyes, but if you cannot feel so, try to realise that He is watching you."

In the darkness of the cave where he and Abu Bakr, took shelter, when pursued by the enemy, even the strong mind of his companion quailed, for, he said, "O Prophet! danger is ahead; and we are but two." "Nay," promptly did the Prophet answer, "We are not two; a third is with us: He is Allah and He will protect us."

Such God-consciousness, such immersion in God-Idea, such God-baptism, if real, naturally leads to the true love of God; and love of God in its turn, must needs lead to love of His creatures. For, then the Muslim realises his kinship with other fellow-men. Love of God establishes ties of relationship stronger than ties of blood.

But brotherhood of man must be based, according to Islam, on the conception of the dignity of men as creation's crown and glory. The Prophet teaches us that by worshipping trees and stones or phenomena of nature or the sun, the moon and the stars, man not only wrongs his Maker but degrades and abases himself. The Holy Quran tells us that the sun, the moon, and the stars, in fact everything in the universe God has created for the service of man. Why should he then worship them? We read in the Quran "Verily We have honoured the children of Adam. We carry them on the land and the sea, and We have made provision of good things for them, and have preferred them

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above many of those whom We created with a marked preferment" (17 : 71).

On the same theme here is another beautiful passage : "Allah is He who created the heavens and the earth and causeth water to descend from the sky, thereby producing fruits as food for you, and maketh the ships to be of service to you, that they may run upon the sea at His command, and hath made of service unto you the rivers ; and maketh the sun and the moon constant in their courses, to be of service unto you, and hath made of service unto you the night and the day. And He giveth you of all ye ask of Him, and if ye would count the bounty of Allah ye cannot reckon it. Lo ! man is verily a wrong-doer, an ingrate." (14 : 33—35).

Indeed, to the great Prophet of Islam humanity is deeply indebted inasmuch as by establishing a strict, unalloyed monotheism, which is admittedly the pride of Islam, he has not only conferred on man a dignity which is his own and has not only enjoined respect for human personality by granting him mental and moral freedom, but also he has turned the brotherhood of man from a pious platitude into a reality. With a full and frank acknowledgment of the unmixed monotheism of Islam and all that it implies one is immediately admitted to the great brotherhood irrespective of his birth or colour, to fully enjoy those rights and privileges to which all Muslims alike are entitled. By the replacement of the material standard of judging man's honour by his birth, race or wealth, by quite a different standard, which is essentially moral and spiritual, the Prophet of Islam brought about a revolutionary change in the assessment of social values. In the result, age-long vested interests and artificial distinctions between man and man were speedily swept away ; the iron walls between class and class disappeared as if by the movement of a magic wand. It was possible only in Islam for the Negro slave, Bilal, to become one of the most respect-

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ed of leaders. Omar, the Head of the Muslim State, treated him with marked respect when Bilal visited him. Even in death he lies buried at Damascus with Ummi Habiba, the Prophet's wife, Saad Ibn Waqqas and Abu Obaida. Zaid, the slave freed by the Prophet, was linked with the Prophet's own uncle, Hamza, the lion of Islam, as a brother. He was given the command of several expeditions and each time he rose equal to the occasion. Of this Islamic democracy which is based on the dignity and equality of man, Meredith Tounsend writes thus : —

" Under Mohammad there sprang up a form of democratic equality more absolute than the world has elsewhere seen. Claims of birth and wealth could be of no value in the presence of a master whose favour implied the favour of the Deity. The proudest Arab could not murmer if God chose a slave like Zaid to be the leader of armies, and visibly confirmed his choice with the seal of the victory. It was a principle of the new sect that Islam extinguished all former relations. The slave, once a Muslim, was dearer than a kinsman ; the pagan, once a Muslim, might preach to attentive listners."

III

Ladies and gentlemen, we have so far had an idea, however superficial and imperfect, of the basic teachings of Islam which, to recapitulate, are briefly these :—

(*a*) Absolute unity of God.
(*b*) Dignity of man as man.
(*c*) Equality and brotherhood of man.
(*d*) Direct access to, fellowship with, and consciousness of God.
(*e*) Synthesis of religion and life.

We may now proceed to consider how far Islam has proved beneficial to humanity and whether it has any contribution to make in future towards the moral and spiritual reconstruction of the world. This is the third and the last point of the present discourse.

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Looked at in their right perspective, the Prophet's teachings I have just mentioned will be found to constitute the vital forces in Islam, forces that have changed the very aspect of a great part of the world. These teachings have set up new ideals of life, new standards of conduct. They have placed the spiritual values above the moral and the material, and by so doing have offered the correct solution of the problems of life as they have arisen in various forms and aspects in different ages since the birth of Islam. This spiritual conception of life—when I say 'life' I do not mean life beyond the grave, to which most of the organised religions with which we are familiar make more or less an exclusive reference, but life on earth with all its kaleiodoscopic interests and varied activities—is at once the strength and beauty of Islam as a religious system. The faith itself has proceeded from the divine source. The Prophet of Islam was undoubtedly a divine agency through which the regeneration of man was, and has to be brought about. The Islamic scripture was a treasury of divine revelations that descended upon the Prophet as occasion demanded throughout the twenty-three years of his ministry. The laws governing our relations with our fellow men as laid down therein or deduced therefrom are as much of divine origin as those that direct our relations with God, so that violation of these laws is, in the belief of the Muslims, a crime against God Himself. Indeed, it is this view of life which is responsible for the intertwining, to an inseparable limit, of the material and the spiritual in the Islamic polity and the Islamic social order. The material and the spiritual are in fact the warp and the woof of the texture of Islam. As a matter of fact, Islam is not intelligible as a system purely and exclusively religious; nor can Islamic polity, and for the matter of that, Islamic society be understood out of relation with the religion of Islam.

"Unfortunately, there is still an abundant misunderstanding", says a recent writer, "of this religion (Islam) in the Western World. It is usually thought to be merely a religion. But Islam is not only a reli-

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gion; it is also a civilisation. It not only directs a man's theology, it forms his society. It is thus a way of life, a way of thinking and acting, an outlook on the world which embraces every aspect of human activity". A similar misunderstanding of Islam and its problems, I venture to think, prevails unfortunately even in our own country, which it should be the endeavour of all Muslims to clear and remove.

It will generally be conceded, ladies and gentlemen, that in the present age the omission of the spiritual element from our culture and civilisation and even from our system of education, particularly in Western countries, has bereft it of its vigour and vitality, and induced a gangrenous condition as well in our body politic as in our social order. Islam has so far, by its employment of spiritual standards and machinery, neutralized the evil effects of a material, Godless civilisation; and, as such, it has proved a veritable blessing to the nations of the world.

This is however not the only way how Islam has counteracted the Godlessness underlying the group activities of the present-day world. Islam has harmonised conflicting forces both in individual and collective life, and has guided humanity to steer clear of the opposite extremes. In doing so it has merely functioned as Providence intended it to function—"and thus have We made you a nation to follow the mean between extremes" (2 : 144). In religion Islam has taken up the intermediate position between monastic asceticism and hedonism, between complete self-abnegation and senseless self-gratification. In ethics he strikes a mean between a cult of relentless retribution and a creed of indiscriminate forgiveness, between the principle of aggressive violence and the doctrine of supine non-resistance. In economical relations it stands midway between the extremes of individualism and communism; it grants the right of private ownership but adjusts it by ordinances to the requirements of communal well-being. In the field of politics Islam reconciles springs of national activity with inter-

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national motives and ideals. It is indeed easy to multiply instances to show how Islam has throughout its long history exercised a steadying influence over moral and spiritual abberrations. It has established an intellectual and moral equilibrium between conflicting ideals; it has acted as a ballast and has often saved the ship of human destiny from wreck and ruin. Who can doubt that the moderating influence of Islam has been to humanity a blessing of inestimable value?

Another priceless benefit which Islam has conferred on humanity is by recognising the position of woman, championing her rights and raising her status. "Mohamad's outstanding contribution to the cause of woman", says Justice Crabites from his experience of the courts in Cairo, "resides in the property rights that he conferred upon the wives of his people. The judicial status of a wife, if so technical a term may be pardoned, is exactly the same as that of the husband. The Muslim spouse, in so far as her property is concerned, is free as a bird. The law permits her to do with her financial assets whatever she pleases without consulting her consort. In such matters he has no greater rights than would have any perfect stranger".

It is to the great Islamic civilisation that the world must ever remain indebted for its achievements in art and literature, science and philosophy. The intellectual emancipation of Europe would never have been possible without the passionate zeal the Muslims displayed for knowledge and without their labours in transmitting the intellectual wealth of Hellenism to Europe—"which brought it to a new flowering, the seeds from which contributed to the renaissance in Europe". The period from the eight to the twelfth century forms a glorious chapter in the history of Islam. Learning was liberally promoted and study of the exact sciences was zealously encouraged. Limits of time prevent me from entering upon this fascinating subject in any measure of detail which I would fain have done. I will rest content with quotations from two eminent scholars. Speaking of the craze for

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learning that characterised the Abbasid period Professor Nicholson says: "It seemed as if all the world from the Caliph down to the humblest citizens suddenly became students, or at least patrons of literature. In quest of knowledge men travelled over three continents and returned home, like bees laden with honey, to impart the precious stores which they had accumulated to crowds of eager disciples, and to compile with incredible industry those works of encyclopædic range and erudition from which modern science, in the widest sense of the word, has derived far more than is generally supposed". M. Sedillot writes: "The vast literature which existed during this period, the multifarious productions of genius, the precious inventions, all of which attest a marvellous activity of intellect, justify the opinion that the Arabs were our masters in everything."

As a political system Islam has rendered great service to humanity. The government of the first four Caliphs was based on the principles of democracy, almost austere in nature and form; and although there have been departures since from the original ideal, Islam has remained till to-day essentially democratic in practice.

Despite what unfriendly critics say, there is the verdict of history that Islam has seldom, if ever, been aggressive. The theory of Islam having been spread at the point of the sword has long since been exploded, and there is hardly any misunderstanding to-day about Jihad or religious war which was permitted only in self-defence. "God only forbids you" we read in the Quran, "to make friends with those, who on account of your religion have warred against you, and have driven you forth from your homes, and have aided those who drove you forth" (60 : 9).

The non-Muslims living in an Islamic State were invariably treated with justice and consideration. They were given the fullest freedom, often by the issue of royal charters, to practise their religion. They were

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entitled to the same civic and political rights as were enjoyed by their Muslim fellow-subjects, and were absolutely equal in the eye of the law.

No doubt, contact with the nations of the West and the influence of their culture and civilisation have brought about important changes in the complexion of the political constitution of Islam. National impulses have in different Islamic countries stirred the minds of the people to their depth; they have in consequence set about building their own political structures in order to work out on independent lines their own political destiny. Politically, therefore, the Islamic world has been divided into separate states, each pursuing its own political ideas according to its own peculiar genius.

These separatist tendencies, it cannot be denied have created in certain countries problems of serious import involving a conflict between the ideal of combining the Muslims of the world into a commonwealth of Islamic States under one Caliph and the ideal of the assertion of national aims and fulfilment of national aspirations. On reflection, however, it will appear that an adjustment of national ideals to the needs of Islamic unity and solidarity is by no means difficult of solution. Indeed, Islam possesses "a magnificent tradition of inter-racial understanding and cooperation", and has, in the past, frankly recognised the right of every nation to autonomous government and political self-determination, although the ideal could not, in the very circumstances of those times, be evolved into concrete forms of government as we see them to-day. But every one will admit that politics is yet in process of evolution and that even now the last word on the subject has not been, and cannot be spoken.

Despite the assertion of national demands in separate areas in the Islamic world, despite the assault of Western thoughts and ideals on Islam, its unity remains unbroken. In fact, Islam has already realised that nationalism must of course be given full and free play

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but it must at the same time be turned into a source of strength to Islamic unity and solidarity. Similarly Islam is never afraid of the impact of Western influences, on its culture and civilisation, for these can never weaken the solidarity of Islam. "It may sound strange", so wrote late Salah-ud-Din Khuda Bakhsh, "but it is none the less true that Western influences and Western experiences, instead of weaning us away, draw us closer and yet closer to Islam. And what is the secret of this wondrous hold? To the savage and the savant Islam appeals with equal force; for there is nothing in Islam to hamper or impede the forward step of man. Free from theology and priest-craft it imposes no rigid code of law. Destitute of ritual and ceremonial it leaves its votary a perfect and free hand in worship and devotion. In its essence splendidly democratic, it gives the freest and fullest scope to the genius of man. The Quran, instead of being a stumbling-block to advancement, is a book, brimming with counsels of perfection for all times and all peoples. It does not restrict but widens the charity of man".

Islam is not yet a spent force. In the future reconstruction of the world-order Islam has an important and honourable part to play, similar to what it played in the hay-day of its glory – the part of a mediator. In the past, it mediated between Hellenism and Europe in the intellectual and cultural field. *In future, it must mediate between the East and the West intellectually, culturally, and even politically.* This has already been recognised by thinking men both of Asia and Europe. "If ever the opposition of the great societies of the East and the West" writes Professor Gibb of the University of London, "is to be replaced by co-operation, the mediation of Islam is an indispensable condition. In its hands lies very largely the solution of the problem with which Europe is faced in its relations with the East. If they unite, the hope of a peaceful issue is immeasurably enhanced – but if Europe, by rejecting the co-operation of Islam, throws it into the arms of its rivals, the issue can only be disastrous for both."

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BIRTH AND CHILDHOOD OF THE PROMISED MESSIAH

The first son of Mirza Ghulam Murtaza died in infancy and was followed by a daughter who was named Murad Bibi. She was a most pious woman. Then was born Mirza Ghulam Qadir (d. 1883 at the age of 55), who was followed by one or two children, who again died in infancy. It is said that Charagh Bibi, the wife of Mirza Ghulam Murtaza had been long praying for a son, who would live long, when Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad was born, on a Friday morning the 13th of February 1835* A.D. His arrival took place immediately after a twin girl (Jannat), who died a few days later. Muhyuddin Ibn Arabi had prophesied that the promised Messiah would be born a twin. According to Biblical chronology Ahmad was born in the latter part of the 6,000th year after Adam's birth, and this was also in accordance with prophecies. There were great rejoicings at his birth. Those who looked at the babe were struck by the Divine halo that encircled the swaddling clothes, and thanked God for the manifold blessings that he had brought to the whole family.

As he grew up the mother took him several times to her parents at Aima, in the Hoshiarpur district. The young and the old in that little village took an interest in the boy, and it was, perhaps, there that the ladies called him Sandhi—a pet name given to a child who is born after prayers and for whose long life vows are made. Ahmad used to play about in the dry beds of the hilly streams that during the rainy season flow

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* Muslim	14 Shawwal,	1250.
Jewish		5594.
Kali Yuga Era		4936.
Vikrama Samvat Era	1 Phagan,	1891.
Parsee Era		1203.

The name of the untrained midwife of the village, who was present at his birth, was Lado. He was given suck for a few days by Mai Sahib Jan, the wife of his uncle Mirza Ghulam Haidar. The mother's milk was not sufficient for the twins.

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down the plains of the Hoshiarpur district. He amused himself there by the innocent amusement of bird-nesting for sparrows, and by his tenderness towards the feathered world gave an early proof of his natural affection. He might also have, sometimes, enjoyed 'sparrow pies'. This was a fitting incident in the life of one who, like Christ, was later to insist that the loving care of the Heavenly Father regarded man as of more worth than many sparrows. Little did Ahmad, however, know that his capturing sparrows was but a preparation for his later ministry as the fisher of men whose nets would eventually be filled with the souls of the whole human race.

Once Ahmad was playing in the fields (Qadian) and wanted to get something from home. A man was tending his goats nearby and Ahmad asked him to fetch it. The man said that he was looking after his goats and therefore could not go. Ahmad offered to look after them in his stead, whereon he went and fetched the required article while Ahmad remained tending the herd. Here we have, perhaps, an unconscious symbolisation of the character of the good shepherd, which has provided an elevated symbol in the great religions of the world.

Once his playmates asked him for some sugar. He went in and filled his pockets with a white stuff thinking it was sugar. While coming out he also felt a liking for something sweet, so took a big pinch of the stuff and was nearly choked because it was salt. This incident may appear to the uncritical as merely that of thoughtlessness; but, in the light of later events, the more reflective person may well ponder and ask whether this was not the first awakening of a mind that, immersed in holy things, lived in an atmosphere of piety not of this world.

An interesting anecdote regarding his childhood may be mentioned here. While he was a mere child he once requested a girl playmate of the same age as

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himself, and to whom he was afterwards affianced, to pray for him that he "may be granted the grace of prayer". This yearning for the grace of prayers in his childhood, in a home devoted to worldliness, proved him to possess a heart pure in a wonderful measure, and destined to work a mighty change in the world.

There existed no schools, colleges, or any educational institutions in those days, and knowledge was generally at a discount. But as Ahmad belonged to a noble family, his father employed a teacher for him when he was six or seven years of age, *i.e.*, about 1840. His name was Fazl Ilahi. He was a resident of Qadian and belonged to the Hanafi School, and taught his pupil the Holy Quran and a few elementary Persian books.

About 1844, when Ahmad was about ten, a new teacher was employed. His name was Fazl Ahmad. He came from Ferozewala, district Gujranwala, and belonged to the Ahl-i-Hadith School. His son, Mobarak Ali of Sialkot became afterwards a follower of Ahmad. He was a good and pious man and worked hard with him. He instructed Ahmad in the elements of Arabic grammar.

When Ahmad reached the age of 17 or 18 (about 1852) a Shia named Gul Ali Shah* of Batala was appointed his teacher, and Ahmad learnt more of Arabic grammar and something of logic. This method was according to the custom of those days. In addition to this, Ahmad's father, being an experienced physician, taught him a few books on medicine.

But learning was altogether at a discount. Ignorance reigned supreme. It was really an age of darkness, and people paid little attention to education. The Sikhs were a barbarous people and the country was in a state of chaos. It should not, therefore, be

* He was a great smoker and some of his pupils would make fun of him, but Ahmad never joined them and always remained respectful. And thus uninspired by applause and undeterred by ridicule he gave early evidence of his courageous determination to remain loyal to his principles.

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supposed that Ahmad had a very good education. Compared with the standard of modern education his teachers themselves did not know much. His fellow students are known as men of very mediocre attainments; and as a matter of fact, the education of those days consisted merely in the reading of Urdu, Persian and Arabic, and the ability to speak and write Persian. There were no facilities whatever for the acquisition of higher education. But there was one thing that distinguished Ahmad from other students and from the other members of the family, and that was that he was fond of study. He would remain so much absorbed with his father's library that many a time his father had to remonstrate with him, fearing that he might injure his health. The father also desired to wean him from his studious habits, and to see him engaged in assisting him in his worldly affairs. A good deal of his time, however, was spent in the mosque reading the Holy Quran, and he was fond of pacing up and down—a sign of restless energy.

Ahmad was not fond of games or sports. He seldom took an active part in any of them, although it is said that on several occasions he acted as an Umpire or a Referee.

Ahmad could swim and ride. He says he was once nearly drowned, and that an old man saved his life. He had never seen the old man before and never saw him again. Another riding incident is also related of Ahmad. He was once riding an impetuous horse, which got out of control, became very dangerous, and then crashed against a tree and was instantaneously killed.

People usually kept and used weapons in those days and to be acquainted with the use of the sword, the bow or the gun was generally considered a sign of respectability. Fencing was a popular game. It is curious that Ahmad never cared for such war-like sports and never indulged in any of them in his youth.

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Perhaps it was due to the fact that he was a Prince of Peace in the making.

When Ahmad was about 16 years of age he was married to Hurmat Bibi, the daughter of his maternal uncle Mirza Jamiat Beg. It is significant to note that the marriage of his elder brother Mirza Ghulam Qadir with Hurmat Bibi, the daughter of Mirza Ghulam Muhyud-Din, had with great pomp and ceremony been celebrated in the same house for several days ; and it is said that there were provided twenty-two dancing girls to entertain the guests on that occasion. But as a fitting contrast to all this, there was nothing of the kind at the marraige of Ahmad, which took place in a simple manner and strictly in accordance with the teachings of Islam. The first son was born when Ahmad was about 18 or 19 years of age. The child was named Mirza Sultan Ahmad. Two years later was born the second son, Mirza Fazl Ahmad.

The crushing defeat of the Sikhs at Gujrat, on the 21st February, 1849, had given the Punjab to England, and it was annexed on the 2nd of April, 1849. The board of administration ceased to work in 1853, when a Chief Comissioner was appointed over the Punjab.

With the advent of the British rule in the Punjab, the estate of Mirza Ghulam Murtaza was, almost all of it, confiscated. A pension of Rs. 700 was granted to him and his brother, and they retained their proprietary rights in Qadian and the neighbouring villages. And thus was completed the resemblance between Ahmad and Jesus in so far as neither inherited possession of the ancestral estate.

Ahmad's father went subsequently to the expense of thousands of rupees in an endeavour to recover his jagirs, but all his efforts proved of no avail. This disappointment continued to affect his heart till the last day of his life. Ahmad says: "My father, on account of his many disappointments, remained always

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pensive and sad. He had spent close upon Rs. 70,000 in going to Courts of Justice, in order to contest cases which were bound to be fruitless, because the lands which belonged to our forefathers had long passed out of our possession and the recovery of them was but a forlorn hope. The disappointment with its consequent sorrow and grief made a maelstrom of the life of my father, and the sight of his pitiable plight helped me to work a holy change in my own life, because the misery of his life reminded me of that immaculate life which was free from all wordly turmoil. He still remained master of a few villages and received an amount from the British Government in reward for good services, plus the pension of a certain post he had held. But since all these were very inconsiderable compared with what he had once enjoyed, he remained always depressed and sad, and often gave vent to his regret saying, that had the pains he had taken for vile worldly preferment been for the sake of religion, they would have served to make him "an eminent saint". Such was the lesson which Ahmad learnt in his childhood; and so deep an impression did it have on him that he was completely weaned away from this world and the whole of his life was devoted to the service of God.

During the Indian Mutiny in 1857, when "From village to village, from district to district, through hill land and lowland, the signal—unexplained at the time, inexplicable still—sped; and in village after village, in district after district, the spreading of the signal was followed by the increased excitement of the people", the family of "Ahmad did excellent service". Mirza Ghulam Murtaza "enlisted many men, and his son Mirza Ghulam Qadir was serving in the force of General Nicholson when that officer destroyed the mutineers of the 46th Native Infantry, who had fled from Sialkot, at Trimughat". These excellent services of the family were acknowledged and commended by the British Officers, and promises were made for the restoration of the family "when a

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favourable opportunity occurs". But that opportunity never occurred. Perhaps the British Authorities could not forget the revolt of Delhi in 1857, during which the city mob had proclaimed a revival of the Mughal Empire.

However, as a result of the Mutiny the Government of India by the East India Company was brought to an end. On the 2nd August, 1858, the Queen signed the Act which transferred the Government of India to the Crown. On November 1st, 1858, at a grand durbar held at Allahabad, a royal proclamation was published, which announced that the Queen had assumed the Government of India. It explained the policy of political justice and religious toleration, which it was her royal pleasure to pursue. Thus was introduced the peaceful revolution that followed the Mutiny. It was really a preparation for the advent of the 'Prince of Peace'. Peace was proclaimed throughout India on the 8th of July 1859. Canning left India in March 1862; Elgin died in 1863, and he was succeeded by Sir John Lawrence, "the savior of the Punjab". It was during the governor-generalship (ended 1869) of this "great proconsul of our English *Christian* Empire" that Ahmad experienced a spiritual revolution and became the great proconsul of the mighty Kingdom of Heaven.

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PROFESSOR WRAGGE'S FIRST INTERVIEW WITH THE PROMISED MESSIAH

(*Translated from Urdu*—Editor)

[*For an account of the second interview see the Review of Religions, May, 1939.*]

PROFESSOR WRAGGE: My wife and I deem it a great privilege to be favoured with this interview.

THE PROMISED MESSIAH: I am very pleased to have met you.

PROF. WRAGGE: I am a traveller and a man of intellectual pursuits. Looking at the Universe, when I perceive the heavens and the earth full of countless, inexpressable wonders, and realise the incalculable range of the Creation of God—system upon system so vast that human imagination reels under the conception I cannot bring myself to believe that the the Originator of this stupendous creation could be confined to any one religious book or religious group. The Muslims have their religion, and the Christians and Jews have theirs. I have no desire to identify myself exclusively with any of these: what I desire is Truth.

THE PROMISED MESSIAH: That, of course, is true: God does not reside in any one religion to the exclusion of all others. God is the Creator and Master of the whole Universe: He is *equally* the God of all mankind. Just as, on the material and physical plane, he sustains all grades of life and all races of men—for which purpose He has ordained a vast system comprising heavenly bodies, a chain of physical laws, air, water and foods of different kinds—similarly for the spiritual needs of man, too, He supplies on an equally liberal and Universal a scale. This is one of the tenets in our faith and this is what we find stated clearly in the Holy Quran. God is the Creator and Sustainer and Developer of all forms of matter, and all grades of life. In all ages and in every clime

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He has been raising His chosen servants to guide man to the goal of Life; and in future too He will continue to do so. و ان من امة الا خلا فيها نذير "Verily, there is no nation to whom We have not sent a warner", says the Holy Quran (35 : 25). In the case of the sacred books of different religions, the apparent contradictions involved are not contradictions, really speaking, as in each period or locality different problems rising from varying conditions of life were dealt with accordingly. To facilitate a proper grasp of this point the process may be likened to the medical treatment of a patient by an intelligent physician: corresponding to the change from time to time in the condition of the patient, there is an alteration in the treatment. When corruption overtakes the actions of man, when his beliefs and ideals too become tainted, when people forsake the worship of the One True God and turn to innumerable gods of their own making, God sends down a reformer. Reformation and improvement do not lie outside the Law of nature ordained by God. We perceive that for us living in the present age the kind of air, the seasons and the food on which the primitive man throve, would not at all be suitable. We need an atmosphere and a change of seasons better suited to our requirements, and each year we need a fresh crop of wheat. On a parallel with this, on the spiritual plane, the sustenance that was provided for man in the past is not enough for the present generations: they stand in need of fresh sustenance. Our argument and method of approach in dealing with an atheist would be different, of course, but a man who believes in God can derive much benefit by pondering over the two parallel planes of man's life—the physical and the spiritual. Just as, by means of seasonal changes and the recurring rains, God imparts renewed life and vigour to man on the physical side, he similarly has instituted a system of spiritual rain which He sends down at the proper time to give fresh spiritual vitality. Should those things cease to exist which support human life, the human race

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would soon become extinct. In like manner the spiritual growth of man would come to a dead halt should the process of spiritual re-vitalization come to an end and man have to subsist on past provisions alone, dried up and parched and made useless through the passage of time. Periodical flashes of the Divine Light are as indispensable to the spiritual growth of man as are the recurring seasons and harvests for the maintenance of physical life. Divine Guides and Reformers are thus a necessity for every age.

It is a dangerous error to turn away from the Prophets of God on the basis of the merest casual glance. The weighty arguments on their side should not be brushed aside simply by saying with regard to any one of them: "he is but an ordinary man." But of course every one is entitled to demand proofs; so we assure all to whom it may concern that we do not take our stand on myths and stories of the past but on definite, solid ground right in front of one's eyes. In these days of scientific progress if you ask any astronomer to take into consideration the marvels of the solar system and other heavenly bodies and to say whether such a world of delicate balance could be ascribed to blind chance, he would be constrained to say that there should be an Intelligent Mind at the back of creation; but with the best will in the world, he would not be prepared to take a more definite stand: he would not be in a position to say definitely, with perfect certainty, that God did exist. Only a Prophet of God could do so.

Q. This earth is only a small planet, and I am sure that there are many other planets like it, and many other systems. I cannot pursuade myself to believe that this world originated only some six or seven thousand years ago, when God created Adam and Eve, and that through the use by this couple of a certain forbidden fruit their entire progeny became sinful.

Ans. We do not hold that the earth is the only planet inhabited. And if any other heavenly body is

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peopled with creatures who stand in need of Divine guidance, as man does, we believe that God must have provided for their guidance too as he has provided for the guidance of man. Neither do we hold that the progeny of Adam became sinful because Adam and Eve did not refrain from tasting the forbidden fruit. The Holy Quran Says: لا تزر وازرة وزر اخرى *i.e.*, "no one is forced to shoulder the burden of another." We do not hold the view that whatever there is, it is to be found on this earth and that it is the centre and focus in point of value of all that is contained in the Universe.

Q. What is sin? We find that modes of conduct considered good and moral in one country, are condemned in another as base and immoral. Moreover we know on the basis of historical studies that man has reached the point of moral distinctions after a long process of evolution of which the net result has been the emergence of the ethical sense. Does morality really amount to no more than the effect of environment? Secondly, what is Satan? and why does God, with His Power and Wisdom, allow Satan to spread evil in the world.

Ans. To discuss this question from the point of view of those who believe in God, human life does not end with the brief span of existence upon this earth, but continues eternally, in a manner of speaking. Real joy and bliss and well-being all proceed from God. When a man behaves in a manner so as to cut himself loose from this Source of Life and Happiness, from this sheet anchor, he is said to have committed a "sin." Further, with an eye upon the ultimate ideal man is destined to attain, he is gifted with numerous faculties which equip him for the march. But in whatsoever he behaves in such a way as to hinder his own progress, he is guilty of "sin." With regard to some of the restrictions designed to keep man from sin, he can penetrate to the wisdom that underlies them. When a man steals, no doubt he does harm to some one, but he also destroys the purity of his own life;

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and an adulterer intrudes into the sex life of one on whom he had no right, but in doing so he does grievous harm to his own soul as well. All those acts which are incompatible with his purity and which, thereby, tend to raise a barrier between him and his Creator, cutting him off from the source of all joy and happiness and bliss, constitutes "Sin." Though there are some restrictions of which ordinary understanding cannot perceive the underlying wisdom, we should rest assured that God is the Highest and knows best and His wisdom embraces everything. He has prescribed for man only such courses of action as are indispensable if he is to march to the goal for which he is equipped. When a physician prescribes a treatment for his patient it ill behoves the sick man to start picking holes in that treatment. Instead he should be thankful to his physician and act upon his advice. Had God chosen not to enlighten us and had He not shown to us the roads which lead to ruin, that course was open to Him, but being رب العالمین in His infinite mercy He vouchsafed knowledge of these things to man. A sick man cannot defy restrictions placed upon him without paying heavily in health. The same principle holds true in respect of moral restrictions. It should be clearly borne in mind that real purity, true happiness and well-being for man lie in the love of God and communion with Him. Not to refrain from a course of action which, on account of the Purity of God, is disagreeable to Him, constitutes "sin". Moreover we observe that almost all nations agree about most of the sins: stealing and adultery, for instance, are everywhere looked upon as sin, and all agree that these actions are displeasing to God and injurious and harmful to the nature of man. Then, too, in many cases when man has been guilty of a sin, he feels it in his bones, so to say, that he has acted wrongly. If a grown-up man were to beat a child, he would be uneasy over it and feel ashamed: on the other hand if he were to feed a man dying of starvation, he would feel satisfied and feel glad for having acted well. Therefore in most cases it is not difficult to know right from wrong, nor on the question is there

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any serious difference between people of different races. As regards Satan, I have explained it on many occasions that two kinds of capabilities have been made inherent in man. One of these pulls him towards what is good and the other impels him towards wrong. This is so because it is desired that he should pass a test successfully, and merit commendation for having refrained from an evil course, and reap that rich reward which follows when a man surrenders himself into the hands of God. In other words Satan is a name for the force that impels a man towards wrong-doing. But we do not believe in Satan alone ; we at the same time believe in angels, too, who pull man in the right direction. Our conception of Satan and such like things is different from Christian ideas on the point, however. Our idea is simple and easy to understand : the power that draws man towards right we call by the name "angels", and the power that drives him to wrong is called Satan.

Q. Of what use is sin in the scheme of creation ?

Ans. God does not will any wrong, nor is He pleased by sin, but He has left man free to chose either course so that, electing to go right, he should deserve a reward Had their been no sin, there would have been no virtue in the world. What is virtue ? It is just the act of refraining from a reprehensible course, *i.e.*, not to steal when it is open to one to do so. Now, had stealing been out of the power of man he would have merited no reward for not stealing. Thus, what we know as ***evil*** really contributes to the progress of man.

Another way of looking at this question is that for a man who believes in God and believes in His all-embracing Knowledge and Wisdom, it is not meet that he should question His deep ways. For instance, it would be silly for him to ask : "Why does the sun always rise in the east ?"

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Suppose there is a man who always screams whenever he speaks and his tone is harsh, and there is another man whose vocal cords are so arranged that it is impossible for him to speak except in a gentle voice. The former would get no reward for speaking gently because it is impossible for him, physically, to speak in any other way. Had man been so constituted as to be debarred from acting except in one and the same manner, there would have been no question of right or wrong for him. What gives rise to the quality of right or wrong is the fact that man is gifted with free will and a number of courses are open to him : pursuance of the golden mean constitutes virtue. Had there been no negative force inclining man towards evil, there would have been no positive aspect which we call *good*.

Q. What we perceive in the world around us leads us to belive that, rising from lower stages, man is gradually progressing towards higher perfections. But the Christians believe that starting from a better condition man has sunk down to sinfulness ; that God created Adam in the beginning, and he deteriorated through sin.

Ans. We do not agree with the Christian view. We agree with the other view which you stated just now.

Q. I should like to hear your views in regard to the next life.

Ans. At the end of man's life in this world there begins for him another life which, so to say, is the reflection projected by his life on the physical plane. Those who sow good seed while on this earth, shall reap a good harvest in the next life ; while those who act otherwise, they shall have to suffer the consequences of their actions. We cannot say that the next span of man's life is divorced and cut off from the first. It is somewhat similar to what befalls us when we go to sleep, as here too man goes through a

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radical change. In the course of a conversation such as this, however, it is not possible to deal more fully with the question.

Q. At this stage Mrs. Wragge asked : "Is it possible to obtain a message from the dead ?"

Ans. Yes. In the moments of "Kashf" it is possible to make contact with the dead, but for this an extraordinary degree of spiritual discipline and training is a pre-requisite. If this condition is fulfilled it is possible to obtain information from those who have passed away. But for this, as I have just said, great spiritual discipline is necessary which the generality of mankind cannot attain to. That is why people make haste to deny such things. I hold that it is not only possible to make contact with the dead in moments of sleep, but also when a man is actually wide awake. I have personally met Jesus Christ in this way, and the Holy Prophet Mohammad, as well as some other people who have passed away.

It is definitely possible to make contact with the dead but it is not possible for every man to make that contact. Marvellous powers lie hidden in man. When digging a well you get pure fresh water, but on reaching a certain depth only. Similarly clear tidings cannot be obtained without the completion of spiritual discipline.

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"LAJNATO AMAILLAH"

The progress of a nation depends upon the combined efforts of men and women both. Just as a bird with one of its wings clipped cannot fly in the air, similarly nations, whose women are uneducated and illiterate, cannot make any progress. Islam, which claims to be the perfect religion for all people requires that Muslim women should be more enlightened than the women of other communities. The responsibility placed on woman's shoulders by nature is very serious *i.e.*, the bringing up and proper training of children. A mother's influence upon her child is the strongest influence. It begins at the most impressionable period of the child's life, and it continues long enough to yield a lasting result. Therefore to bring up children properly it is necessary that the mother should be alive to the responsibilities of her position and well qualified for the proper discharge of her duties.

Keeping these points in view Hazrat Amir-ul-Momineen, the second successor of the Promised Massiah, laid the foundation of a woman's association in Dec. 1922 and named it *Lajnato Amaillah*, *i.e.*, the "Association of the maid-servants of God." He said, "To fulfil our aims in life women are equally called upon to make their contribution to the community's progress. Most women do not realise what Islam requires of them. All through their lives they remain satisfied that the range of their duties is no wider than the petty round of trivial domestic cares from day to day. This fundamental error has stunted the intellectral and spiritual growth of Muslim women and their present backward condition is used by Europeans as a reflection against Islam. Moreover, the poison spread by Christian Missionaries through women can only be counteracted with the help of women. And a mother can create the spirit of self-

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sacrifice and devotion to duty in her children as no one else can. Morever, women's reform can be carried through only with the help of women."

Thus, to sum up briefly, the aim of the *Lajnato Amaillah* is to promote the pursuit and diffusion of knowledge among women; to make women alive to their duties as guardians of the future; to teach them how to help the poor and to contribute their share to the public welfare.

Ever since its incepion the *Lajna* has been working steadfastly with these aims in view. With its head-quarters at Qadian, it has branches in many other towns such as Lahore, Sialkot, Ferozpore, Lyallpore, Gujranwala, Delhi, Hyderabad, Patiala, etc. Among these the reputation of the *Lajna* of Sialkot stands high for good achievement. All branches are closely connected with the certral body from where necessary instructions are sent from time to time.

The membership being largest at Qadian, the *Lajna* here is divided into sub-sections to facilitate work and meetings in convenient localities. These meetings are held once a week. The presidents and secretaries of the sub-sections also meet once a week to submit their reports to the general secretary and to consider various problems encounted in the course of the work.

The *Lajna* has funds of its own. Every member has to contribute a monthly subscription which amounts from half an anna to two annas. Besides this, extra subscriptions are also collected when needed. Moreover, this association has put into practice a good scheme to raise funds by utilising the spare time of its members: they prepare various articles such as handkerchiefs, socks, sweaters, caps, table cloth, etc., without wages, and sell these things. The profit thus raised is contributed to the funds of the association.

In order to provide work for poor and helpless

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women and to prevent them from begging, another scheme was started recently. Though this work is in its early stages, yet good results have been secured and more is expected from it.

Exhibitions are held of the articles manufactured by members in which different kinds of handiwork is shown and sold. In order to encourage members in this work prizes are distributed. Uptil now ten exhibitions have been held. This money is donated to the missionary work done by the association.

To encourage education among women meetings are held and other propaganda carried on by the society. Learned women or girls of the community are provided with occasions to deliver lectures. These meetings have proved very successful, with the result that many girls have become good speakers. The *Lajna* of Sialkot manages a school that has made rapid and sound progress. Moreover, the members of the association have undertaken voluntary work to teach reading and writing, the Holy Quran and *nimaz* to women who have not had the benefit of education. This effort also has proved successful and many have benefited by it. The aim is to remove illiteracy and the work has been soundly organised.

The *Lajna* has a library of its own, named Amatul Hai Library after the name of the first secretary of the association. When opened this library contained only a few books but soon the number rose to over one thousand volumes. Annual subscription of this library is Rs. 1-8.

On the occasion of the annual gathering at the headquarters of the Ahmadiyya Movement, ladies' sessions are held separately where the general management is entrusted to the central *Lajna*.

In short this association has proved very useful to the Ahmadiyya Movement in many ways, and the *Lajnato Amaillah* has a bright future to look forward to.

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